

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 18, 2011

Agenda Item: Final 2011 Early Season Migratory Bird Seasons

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule

Time for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Migratory bird seasons have direct federal oversight and coordination. Mourning doves and Wilson's (common) snipe season dates and bag/possession limits have mostly remained unchanged from year to year. Sandhill crane bag limits have been largely static with limited permit numbers fluctuating and season dates varying with the progression of the calendar. The Rocky Mountain population of sandhill cranes is annually monitored with individual states' allowable harvest quotas based upon observed numbers and coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In Montana, allowable harvest numbers are used to determine permit numbers for each of four areas (Dillon/Twin Bridges/Cardwell, Deer Lodge County, Ovando-Helmville, Wheatland/Meagher/portion of Sweetgrass Counties). Crane harvest has consistently been well below allowable levels with hunter access somewhat limited.

For sandhill cranes the proposed opening and closing season dates for 2011 are below and represent calendar progression but no change to season length from 2010. The crane permit quota for the Warm Springs Area (280-01) is proposed to go from 30 to 5 permits. For all other 2011 Early Season Migratory Bird Season elements, there are no proposed changes from 2010. There is no change in the final proposal from the initial adoption.

- Season dates for Rocky Mountain Population of Sandhill Cranes (special drawn permits): Sept 10 – Sept. 25
- Season dates for Mid-continent Sandhill Cranes: Sept. 24– Nov. 20
- 280-01 crane permits in Warm Springs portion of Deer Lodge County decreased from 30 to 5

Public Involvement Process & Results

The public comment window will run through 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 8, with final adoptions scheduled for Aug. 18. Public comments will be presented to the Commission.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

At this time, FWP recommends for 2011 no change to 2010 season elements except the date and permit changes noted above to maintain opportunity related to population biology, hunter access/harvest and game damage considerations.

Proposed Motion

I move the commission adopt the final 2011 Early Season Migratory Bird Seasons as presented by FWP.